

# ON TRANSLATION OF CHURCH-SLAVONIC ORTHODOX TERMS IN FRENCH

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## Abstract

Church Slavonic orthodox terms are part of Orthodox terminology that have specific etymological origin. Church Slavonic language is actually liturgical language currently used within the Macedonian Orthodox Church - Ohrid Archbishopric. It originates from the Old Slavic language, with adapted pronunciation and orthography and with certain lexical modifications.

The translation of these terms is needed from a pragmatic point of view – numerous orthodox emigrants in France but also the translation of contemporary Macedonian authors in French who use these terms because of their specific semantic and stylistic nuances. On the other hand, terminology resources considering this specific field are rare.

In that sense, the paper aims to elaborate the possibilities of translation of these terms in French imposing not only bridging of two languages with different history, but also, bridging of two cultures with different religious traditions: orthodox and catholic.

## Introduction – the use of Church Slavonic terms in religious contexts

Because of the need of spreading the Word of God, the history of translation is closely linked to the translation of religious texts, especially to the Bible translation. The orthodox Slaves know well the importance of the Bible translation in Old Slavonic by Saints Cyril and Methodius<sup>1</sup> – it meant not only bringing closer the beauty of the Christianity and of the Christian ethics to the people, but also, rising of the Church Slavonic language among languages through which the Word of God could be preached. We should also mention that the Bible translation in Old Slavonic gave birth to the first theoretical text on translation – the *Tractatus on translation* by Saint Methodius. In the *Tractatus* he treats some basic translation problems such as the semantic approach on translation, the grammar differences, the differences concerning lexical fields, etc<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> They started translating the Bible in 863 and finished it by 880.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on Bible translation by Saints Cyril and Methodius see: Арсова-Николиќ: 1999.

The Old Slavonic language in which the Bible was translated gave afterwards birth to several language versions (also called *редакции* – *redactions*). These versions are still being used in different archbishoprics. Thus, today, in the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Ohrid archbishoprics the Macedonian version (redaction) of the Church Slavonic language is in use. It has specific (adopted to the contemporary Macedonian language) pronunciation and orthography and some older and complex words are replaced with clearer and more contemporary equivalents.

Because of the use of the Macedonian version of Old Church Slavonic language in the Macedonian Orthodox Church it's evident that terms of Church Slavonic origin are used in the religious texts, as well as in the translation of the Bible in contemporary Macedonian by the head of the Church at that time Gavril<sup>3</sup>. Still, these terms become more and more interesting to analyze because of their use not only in the religious contexts, but also in the contemporary Macedonian literature. We come across Church Slavonic orthodox terms in the work of famous Macedonian contemporary writers like Andonovski and Mihajlovski, for example and they often represent a basis for further linguistic experiments.

### **Cultural and stylistic aspects of translation of Church Slavonic orthodox terms in French**

The translation of these specific terms in French raises numerous question. The first one is of practical nature – *is there a real need for translation of these terms in French, a non-Slavonic language spoken by people who do inherit the Christian tradition, but the catholic one?*

Firstly, we should mention that there is a certain orthodox community in France (namely in Paris) that consist of Russian emigrants, but also a lot of Balkan emigrants. Then, a very important orthodox education centre is the Saint Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris established at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The history shows that usually the migrants' children born in the new country tend to use less the language of their parents and they feel the need to express the orthodox reality in French. In that sense, some of the texts used during liturgies are already translated from Russian or Serbian in French<sup>4</sup>. Macedonian students studying at this Institute fill the need to translate certain specific terms in French. Certainly, of great importance is the tendency of translation of the books of contemporary Macedonian writers such as Andonovski's novel *Witch* translated in French in 2014. The novels abounds in Church Slavonic terms and even phrases used during liturgies in Macedonian orthodox churches.

The translation of these terms is needed from a practical point of view, but it also raises numerous questions that concern cultural and stylistic aspects.

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<sup>3</sup> The third archbishop of the reestablished Macedonian Orthodox church Gavril completed the translation of the Bible by 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Some orthodox liturgies in French are available at:  
<http://www.pagesorthodoxes.net/liturgie/liturgie.htm>

The cultural aspects regard the fact that even though the orthodox tradition shares the Christian tradition in general, it has also its own tradition and concepts that are quite distant for French readers. On the other hand, these terms are strongly marked by specific stylistic nuances especially by the archaic nuance. The archaic elements in the religious texts are elaborated by David Cristal in the article *Whatever happened to theolinguistic?* (in press) indicating that this archaic nuance has a certain pragmatic function – to establish *consistency and continuity*<sup>5</sup>. In English this consistency is ensured by the use of terms of Old and Middle English, whereas in Macedonian by the use of Old Church Slavonic terms. In quest for possible French equivalents the article will analyze two corpuses: *Terminology Bulletin of Theology* by Takovski and the French translation of the novel *Witch*. In order to verify or compare certain solutions we will also quote Martine Roty's *Dictionnaire russe-français des termes en usage dans l'Église russe* and Deschler's *Dictionnaire slavon-français*.

### **General characteristics of translation of Church Slavonic orthodox terms in French**

When analyzing the translation of these specific terms in French we can start with categorizing the terms. So, there is a group of terms that are part of the Christian tradition that are well established in use and are not felt as unusual by the speakers. There are also terms that are specialized and are used in orthodox contexts. It is clear that the limits between the first two groups are not strict.

On the other hand, from the point of view of word formation we can mention simple and compound terms. In both groups there is also a large number of terms characterized by the ending *–(н)уе*.

**In the first group** of terms designating general Christian notions that are spread in the everyday communication we can quote terms like: *крстѣлница, проповѣд, молитва, Служитель, завет* etc. The corresponding French terms are also wide spread: *baptistère (baptistery), prière (prayer), sermon, Sauveur (Saviour), testament*.

**The second group** embraces specialized terms used in strict orthodox contexts. In the *Terminology Bulletin* they are translated using different techniques.

-A large number of these terms are translated with a generic term – without translating the archaic nuance. The term *жумуе* (hagiography) is translated *biographie* (biography), *мѹмѹрѹмѹо* (a sort of customs before entering the Paradise) – *douane* (customs), *пуза* (monastic cloths) – *vêtements* (cloths), *образ*

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<sup>5</sup> Religious English language, unlike religious Arabic language, tends to use archaic words to historically link to its established beliefs throughout the course of time and to ensure consistency and continuity. To this end some archaic words are used that can be traced back to the Old and Middle English.

(usually the image of God) – *image*, *подвиг/подвижник* (asceticism, spiritual fight) – *combat*.

-Only one term translated with a Church Slavonic borrowing – *молебен* (*specific orthodox supplicatory prayer*) is translated with the transcribed version *moleben*.

-Very often the corresponding French equivalent is a term of Greek or Latin origin: *мошти* –*relique* (relics), *Слово* –*Verbe* (Word), *зачало* – *péricope* (pericope).

- The paraphrase is used rarely like in the case of the term *јуродив* translated as *fou pour le Christ* although much frequently used is the term *fol en Christ*<sup>6</sup>.

The establishment of an equivalence is sometimes more difficult because of the inner polysemy<sup>7</sup>. Thus the term *агнец* can designate a particular seal used to put a mark on a bread and as part of the syntagma *агнец Божју* (*the Lamb of God*). In French there is only one equivalent not transferring the archaic nuance *agneau* (*lamb*).

As far as the last terms is concerned it is very interesting to analyze it not only in context of terminology resources, but also in terms of its use in literary context. Thus, in the novel *Witch* the syntagma *агнец божју* is frequently used and is translated with the French syntagma *agneau divin*. However, the translator felt that the frequent use of this syntagma in Macedonian tends to underline the archaic Church Slavonic and in one passage (Andonovski: 2014, p.280) she transcribed the term *agnec boziji* and then explained it in the margins.

As far as the word formation is concerned there are two categories to be analyzed: simple and compound terms. In both groups there are a lot of lexemes with the ending *-(н)ие* mentioned by Koneski (Конески:1981) and Koneski (Конески:1993). The simple terms with these endings usually have a generic equivalent in the Terminology Bulletin. For example, the equivalent of the term *бдение* is *vigile* (vigil), *венчание* - marriage (marriage), *подобие* – resemblance (resemblance), *смирение* - humilité (humility), *созерцание* –contemplation. The archaic nuance is not transferred in the target language. In the Bulletin there is only one simple term that has a Greek equivalent *величание* –*mégalinairé* (specific byzantine chant). Finally, we should underline that the translation of terms highly depends on the context and that some terms have one equivalent in the terminology resources and other in literary passages. For example, the term *безмолвие* is translated in the Bulletin as *silence*, *hésichasme* (hesychasm), whereas in the novel *Witch* it is translated as *l'apaisement* (appeasement).

The Church Slavonic orthodox terminology is rich in compound terms. These terms are analyzed by Makarijoska (2009) and Kostovska (2012) who conclude that the within the compound Church Slavonic terms most numerous are adjectives, then nouns, verbs etc. As far as the structure is concerned the compound words are usually formed by merging of two semantically motivated elements.

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<sup>6</sup> The term *iurodivy* and even the plural form *iurodivie* is also in use under the influence of Russian

<sup>7</sup> Polysemy in the framework of the specialized area

From a semantic point of view, Makrijoska (2009) underlines that compound lexemes usually designate abstract notions, i.e. religious, ethical, philosophical and aesthetical notions. On a stylistic level, the compound terms have a certain poetic nuance. In that sense, they are often part of “younger” religious texts and because of their stylistic nuance they are often used in the works of contemporary authors like Andonovski and Mihajlovski, for example.

Because of their characteristics, on structural and stylistic level it is of great interest to analyze the approach of the terminology or of the translator in search of corresponding equivalents.

From the performed analysis we established four principal groups of equivalents.

1. In the first group are the compound Church Slavonic terms in use in Macedonian orthodox terminology that are calques of Greek compound terms. Usually, French equivalents are the Greek compound terms.

A very representative example in this group is the Church Slavonic name of the mother of God - *Богородица*. The term is a compound of noun and verb i.e. the Macedonian term *Богородица* means “She who gave birth to God”. This compound term is actually a calque of the Greek term *Theotokos*: - *Theos* -God, *tokou* –gives birth. In French (as well as in English) there are no denominations referring to the mother of God as to the one that gave birth to God, but the syntagma God’s mother/ Mother of God (*mère de Dieu*) or the noun – Virgin (*Vièrge*). Orthodox believers who express themselves in French (and in English) have felt the need to use this denomination, so gradually in these contexts they started using the Greek word *Theotokos*. In this sense, although the term *Theotokos* is not given as an equivalent in the Bulletin of Theology (Таковски: 1999) it is mentioned in the Martin Roti’s dictionary (Roti: 2010). Dumas (2009) also, underlines that this word is an element marking the existence of a separate Orthodox terminology in French. As far as the English is concerned, the term *Theotokos* is also mentioned by Katchen (Katchen: 2008) noting that the term was felt as distant and vague by the public. It is clear the compound Church Slavonic term is a calque of the Greek word and that in French the Greek borrowing is in use.

A similar example is the term *надбедреник* - calque of the Greek term *épignation* (epignation). The French language retained the compound Greek term *épignation* whereas the Macedonian language took the Old Church Slavonic calque. So the term is clearer and easier to use, while the French term is pretty vague, and the denomination is not characteristic for the French language system. Similarly, the term *великомаченик* is a Church Slavonic compound term whose equivalent in French is Greek compound term *megalomartyr* (great martyr). The term *богослов* of Old Slavic origin is used in Macedonian along with the term *теолог*, whereas in French the term of Greek origin *théologien* (theologian) is in use. Similar example is that of the term *чудотворец*- the corresponding French

equivalent is the Greek compound term - *thaumaturge* or the denomination of the religious holiday *Богоявление* – *Théophanie* (Theophany) in French.

2. The second group can be illustrated by the use of the Macedonian attributes of Jesus Christ: *седржител* and the Greek term *пантократор*, having the same meaning. The Macedonian term is polysemic and designates an attribute of Christ as well as His representation in glory. In French, the Greek borrowing *pantokrator* or *pantocrator* has double orthography, but it is not polysemic. This term is reserved for the representation of Christ in glory, and the French syntagma *tout puissant* (*almighty*) is used as an attribute. It is to be noted that the French syntagma does not transfer the poetic nuance of the term *седржител* used almost exclusively in orthodox contexts.

A similar example (where the Church Slavonic compound term has for equivalent a French syntagma) is the epithet of Jesus Christ *богочовек* –translated as *homme-Dieu* (God-man).

3. It is not rare that in Takovski's Terminology Bulletin for certain compound Church Slavonic terms as equivalents are offered lexemes or even synonymous arrays that represent semantic equivalents of the Church Slavonic terms, but that does not possess specific archaic and stylistic nuances. Thus, as an equivalent of the term *благолетие* we find the term *beauté* (beauty), for *благочестие-dévotion* (devotion). For the terms *целомудреност* or *благоразумност* in the Bulletin (1999) we find single, non-compound words that are not archaic *sobriété* (sobriety), *chasteté* (chastity), *modération* (moderation).

4. For certain compound Church Slavonic terms the translation equivalents are represented as a paraphrase. For example, the epithet *човекољубив* is translated as *plein d'amour pour les homes* (full of love for men) (Таковски: 1999). The term *мироварение* left without French equivalent in the Bulletin can be also translated with a paraphrase *préparation de l'huile sainte* (preparation of the holy oil). In the Church-Slavonic-French dictionary, for the compound term *богоотец* we find the paraphrase *père de Dieu* (God's father).

Finally, we can also analyze the translation of these compound term in the novel *Witch*. In fact, the author uses three compound terms *црноризец*, *предисловие* and *богочатец* translated with three different translation techniques. The term *црноризец*, a compound term that consists of adjective (black) and a noun (person wearing monastic cloths) is translated with the paraphrase *homme de Dieu* (man of God) that is rather a hyperonym of the Church Slavonic term. For the term *предисловие* (109), a compound term formed of adverb (in front of) and a noun (a word, verb), we find a compound equivalent *préambule* (113) (preamble), whereas the term *богочатец* is transcribed *bogocatec*, and then explained in the margins *celui qui lit Dieu, qui a découvert Dieu, théologien* (the one who reads God, who discovered God, theologian).

## The neologisms

The influence of the Church-Slavonic in the contemporary Macedonian literature is felt through the presence of some Church Slavonic terms, but also through the presence of Church-Slavonic word formation elements. In that sense, we can mention prefixes and suffixes characteristic for the Church-Slavonic, but used or combined with contemporary Macedonian words or word formation elements.

We find experiments with Old Church Slavonic models in the Mladenoski's novel *Samsung* (Младеноски: 2008). Thus, there are two lexemes with the ending *-ue*: *полуосвещение* (*dim light*) and *еднокрилие* (*single door*) and another neologism coined on the basis of anthonymy – *ѓаволугодно* (*pleasant to devil*) having an opposite meaning of the compound lexeme *богугодно* (*pleasant to God*)<sup>8</sup>.

Mladenoski's novel is not translated in French, nor in English so we will have to concentrate on the neologisms found in the Andonovski's novel *Witch*. In the novel new compound words are frequently based on archaic models. That is the case of the two compound lexemes *краснословец* and *краснодумец*. Both compound words have the same first element *красно-* having an adjectival function and meaning "beautiful" as well as the second part are different verbal nouns coming from the two archaic words *слови* and *дума* meaning "speaking" and "thinking". It's quite clear that their translation represents an enormous challenge especially in respect to the transferring the archaic nuance and to the transferring of their compound structure. The translator opted for a paraphrase embracing both terms - *un esprit éloquent* or "an eloquent spirit" thus giving to the lecturer the meaning of the terms, but not the specific stylistic nuances.

Another very interesting neologism is the attribute *најпресвета* based on the attribute of the God's mother *пресвета* literally meaning "very saint". The neologism comprises both the prefix *пре-* indicating already a certain prevalence with the superlative prefix *нај-* thus creating a strange overtone, difficult to transfer in the target-text. The translator transferred again the meaning, but not the style, because in the French target-text we can only find the standard superlative *le livre le plus sacré* – *the most sacred book*.

## Conclusion

The objective of the paper was to analyse the possibilities of translation of a specific group of Church Slavonic orthodox terms in French. The terms were analysed in context of terminology resource – Takovski's *Terminology Bulletin* and in literary context – the translation of the Andonovski's novel *Witch* in French.

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<sup>8</sup> On the function of lexemes in this novel see: Јакимовска (2015)

The analysis was performed from two points of view- from the level of specialization of terms and from a word formation perspective.

As far as the first criterion is concerned, the first group of widely spread terms is well embedded in use and usually does not impose any obstacle for the translator. On the other hand, the specialized terms are differently translated in the *Bulletin*. Thus, terms are usually translated with a generic term or with a corresponding term of Greek or Latin origin. Paraphrases are rare and there is only one term with Old Church Slavonic equivalent –*moleben*.

The word formation criterion embraces two groups –simple and compound terms. Simple terms are analysed from the point of view of the characteristic endings –*ie*, –*nue* whereas the compound terms are object of a longer analysis. A large number of Church Slavonic terms are calques of compound Greek terms and usually French equivalents are in fact adapted Greek calques. In the *Bulletin*, one can also find a large number of paraphrases corresponding to these terms, but also generic terms that do not transfer the archaic or poetic nuance. In literary context the three compound terms are translated using three different techniques – syntagma (hyperonym), transcription and explanation and a compound equivalent.

Finally, special attention should be paid to the neologisms based on Church Slavonic models. They represent a sort of linguistic experiment very difficult to translate. In the analyzed corpus – the translation of the novel *Witch* they are translated with a paraphrase or terms from the standard language not transferring the stylistic nuances that these terms provoke in the reader of the source text.

The Church Slavonic orthodox terms are very rarely analyzed from a translational point of view. Therefore there is a wide field of work to be done in analyzing or proposing translation solutions. The terminology resources referring to orthodox terminology are not numerous or not very exhaustive and that is also an aspect that should be considered.

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